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The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Conspiracies: Andrew Johnson

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

ROLLING STONE

PAUL
SIMON

The Odyssey of Urban Melancholy

By Paul Cowan

Late-Breaking News on the

LINCOLN

• ASSASSINATION •

Andrew Johnson's Smoking Pistol

By Timothy Crouse

A Conversation with the Real

WOODY
ALLEN

Or Someone Just like Him

L.A.

TURNOFF

Driving through the Days of Future Passed

By Jan Morris

SUMMER CONCERT
MADNESS

Stones, Beach Boys,
Eagles, Elton, Alice Cooper,
Santana, Starship

A Conspiracy Theory to End All Conspiracy Theories:

DID

JOHN WILKES BOOTH

ACT ALONE?



FORD THEATER, APRIL 14TH, 1865: MOMENTS BEFORE THE ATTACK

The Startling Revelations of Young Nathaniel Orlowek

DID JOHNSON HELP KILL THE PRESIDENT?

Andrew Johnson
and
President Lincoln, That Is



THE LATE PRESIDENT

By Timothy Crouse

THE INFURIATING THING about nut theories is there's always that million-to-one shot that an irrefutable piece of evidence is out there somewhere, half-buried, as it were, just waiting for someone to stoop down and dig it up. Like the theory of the 18-year-old kid in Silver Spring, Maryland, who's trying to prove that John Wilkes Booth died in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1903. And that it was actually some miserable wretch of a farmhand who was shot in that burning barn 12 days after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. And that Booth escaped with the help of Andrew Johnson, who was in on the plot.

Sounds like a certifiable nut theory, all right, and so far the kid's been dismissed by every right-thinking Lincoln expert in the country. But the kid is absolutely sure

that the evidence is out there . . . somewhere . . . if only that, damn mummy would turn up.

The kid's name is Nathaniel Orlowek, a history whiz and freshman at the University of Maryland. I first heard of his theory a few months back and was just about to dismiss it myself until I heard about the mummy. I decided to check it out. After all, it was a pretty grim story, but a whole lot less depressing than everything else going on in Washington.

I got hopelessly lost on the way to Silver Spring and arrived an hour late, but Nate Orlowek didn't seem to mind. When he opened the door of his family's white clapboard house, which looked like all the other houses on Loxford Terrace, he was clearly excited at the prospect of being interviewed. He had the look of a kid who has just won first prize for his science project and knows that he is going to go on to discover the cure for cancer. His friendly, baby-fat face was wreathed in mutt-on-chop sideburns; he wore a blue,

short-sleeved sports shirt, checked wool pants and Hush Puppies. Sitting on the crown of his head, like the *Good Housekeeping* Seal of Approval, was a black yarmulke.

I had half expected to find a ouija board on the coffee table, or a little shrine with votive candles flickering in front of a death mask of Lincoln. So the yarmulke was infinitely reassuring. It betokened a good, kosher, rule-abiding, literate, suburban Orthodox Jewish household, a bastion of logic, rationalism, and progress through education, a place where nut theories would be anathema.

Such was the Orlowek household. Father Orlowek, a thin man with a kindly, owlish face who worked for the Social Security Administration, was watching a basketball game on the color TV in the den. He had once done graduate work in history at Columbia and encouraged his son's interest in the subject. Mother Orlowek, a big woman dressed in a polka-dot housecoat and with one curler still in

THE UNTIMELY PLOT

to Kidnap Honest Abe

Could the Actor Have
Played an Asthmatic Bar-
tender? A Dying House
Painter? Could a
Farmhand Have Played
the Actor?

THE RED-HAIRED HERRING

and the Mysterious 18-Page Gap

THE CURSE

of the Missing Mummy



JOHN WILKES BOOTH: ALIVE UNTIL 1903?



ANDREW JOHNSON'S
SMOKING PISTOL

her hair, was reading *My Life* by Golda Meir. She was not a doting mother but she was obviously proud of Nathaniel. He had been a minor prodigy, she said;

at 12 he had read the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from cover to cover and stored much of it in his photographic memory. He always had a passion for history and

a knack for impressing people with his amazing retention of historical fact.

Orlowek had dutifully invited over two friends—Marc and Howard—who had helped him with the research. We all sat down at the dining room table on cellophane-covered chairs. The two friends didn't have much to say except that one of them, an allergic type, asked me not to smoke. Nate did all the talking. He had told his story dozens of times but he launched into it again with great enthusiasm and stunted no detail.

The whole thing began three years ago, he said, when he read *The Web of Conspiracy* by Theodore Roscoe, a mammoth study of the Lincoln assassination. Toward the end of this encyclopedic work, Roscoe mentioned *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth*, a book by a Memphis lawyer named Finis L. Bates, which was published in 1907 and sold 70,000 copies. Bates claimed to have known a Texas bartender named John St. Helen, who in 1877 suffered a bad attack

of asthma, thought himself about to die and confessed to Bates that he was really John Wilkes Booth.

ST. HELEN RECOVERED from his illness and several weeks later (according to Bates) spilled the whole incredible tale: how he had plotted with the secretly pro-Confederate Andrew Johnson to kidnap Abraham Lincoln and ransom him for Confederate prisoners of war; how that plan suddenly fell through when General Lee surrendered in the first days of April 1865; how Johnson then persuaded him to murder Lincoln, assured him that his escape would be arranged and sealed the deal with a cold, clammy handshake; how on the night of April 14th he escaped over the Navy Yard Bridge by giving the sentries a prearranged password ("T.B., T.B. Road") and was later led across the Potomac River to Virginia by a mercenary farmhand; and

finally how the farmhand was shot to death in a barn and mistakenly identified as Booth while the real Booth galloped toward safety in West Virginia.

FINIS BATES AND JOHN ST. Helen parted ways soon after this spectacular confession, but Bates spent a good part of the next 45 years trying to prove that St. Helen really was Booth. In 1898 he began to pester the War Department with claims to the \$50,000 reward that had been offered in 1865 for information leading to the capture of Booth. In 1903 a house painter named David E. George poisoned himself in an Enid, Oklahoma, hotel room and announced with his dying breath that he was

John Wilkes Booth. Bates hopped a train to Enid, presented himself at the undertaker's and, 25 years after having last seen his old friend, triumphantly identified the corpse as that of John St. Helen. Later, Bates had the body mummified and shipped it back to his barn in Memphis to use as evidence. It was Bates's claim that certain marks on the body (a fencing scar above the right eyebrow, a deformed right thumb) proved beyond a doubt that it was Booth. (After Bates died in 1923, his widow sold the mummy to a prohibitionist doctor, and eventually it found its way to a Midwestern sideshow entrepreneur.)

Historian Roscoe's attitude toward Finis Bates was not kind. Laying out all the charges that reporters and historians had leveled against Bates—forgery of

affidavits, doctoring of photographs, profiteering, wild exaggeration—Roscoe concluded that Bates was a fraud.

But Bates's story intrigued Nate Orlowek. "On Columbus Day, 1973, my friend and I decided to look for the Bates book," said Orlowek. "We discovered it was in no public libraries but we finally found it in the rare book room of the University of Maryland. We've since found that there are only two copies in the world."

(I made a mental note: "Kid may have problem with exaggeration.") Even Orlowek later admitted that there were more than two copies of the book around.)

Having seen the Bates book, Orlowek nervously called up Theodore Roscoe—"Here I was, this 15-year-old kid talking to the great expert!"—and asked if he didn't think the Bates theory warranted further investigation. Roscoe politely replied that the case was long since closed. Undaunted, Orlowek started visiting the Library of Congress. The Library had a rule that high school students were forbidden to use the books, but Orlowek got Senator Charles Mathias of Maryland to get the ban lifted. "Every time we got a day off, we would go down there," he said. "Mysteriously enough, new things started to appear—new affidavits, circulars, books and magazine articles. They'd been published 50, 60 years ago, but just that year—1974—they had started to come in. As we went along on our research, we got to know a lot of people, and we collected a lot of personal evidence that's never been published before—pictures, affidavits, letters and so forth." They began to discover facts that fit like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle with the Bates version.

"All right, Nate," I said. "This is what really interests me. What kind of corroboration did you find for Bates?"

Orlowek began rattling off dozens of fascinating facts. Some seemed to support



YOUNG NATE ORLOWEK

the contention that Andrew Johnson (or somebody else) had prepared the way for Booth's escape. On the night Lincoln was shot, for instance, the Army closed off seven of the eight escape routes leading out of Washington—every route but the one taken by Booth.

BUT THE FACTS THAT impressed me most had to do with suspicions surrounding Booth's death and burial. There were stories circulating at the time that Booth had not been killed at Garrett's farm, and many more came later. The Kenzie affidavit, for instance. Kenzie was a private in the Union Army who claimed to have known Booth at the peak of his acting career; in the early morning hours of April 26th, 1865, he



BURRATT



BOOTH



HAROLD

War Department, Washington, April 20, 1865.

\$100,000 REWARD!

THE MURDERER

Of our late beloved President, Abraham Lincoln,
IS STILL AT LARGE.

\$50,000 REWARD

Will be paid by this Department for his apprehension, in addition to any reward offered by Municipal Authorities or State Executives.

\$25,000 REWARD

Will be paid for the apprehension of JOHN H. BURRATT, one of Booth's accomplices.

\$25,000 REWARD

Will be paid for the apprehension of David C. Harold, another of Booth's accomplices.

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All persons harboring or receiving the said persons, or either of them, or aiding or assisting their concealment or escape, will be treated as accessories to the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before a Military Commission and the punishment of DEATH.

Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers. All good citizens are exhorted to aid public justice on this occasion. Every man should consider his own conscience charged with this solemn duty, and ever watchful night and day until it be accomplished.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

DESCRIPTIONS.—BOOTH is Five Feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender build, high forehead, black hair, black eyes, and wears a heavy black mustache.

JOHN H. BURRATT is about 5 feet, 9 inches. Hair rather thin and dark; eyes rather light; no beard. Would weigh 145 or 150 pounds. Complexion rather pale and clear, with color in his cheeks. Wears light clothes of fine quality. Shoulders square; chest broad and prominent; white mustache; nose projecting at the tip; forehead rather low and square, but broad. Parts his hair on the right side; back rather long. His lips are firmly set. A slim man.

DAVID C. HAROLD is five feet six inches high, hair dark, eyes dark, eyebrows rather heavy, full face, nose short, hand short and thick, feet small. Lively high, round headed, naturally quick and active, slightly closes his eyes when looking at a person.

NOTES.—In addition to the above, State and other authorities have offered rewards amounting to almost one hundred thousand dollars, making an aggregate of about TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS.



WAS THIS BOOTH'S 'LAST HOUR'?

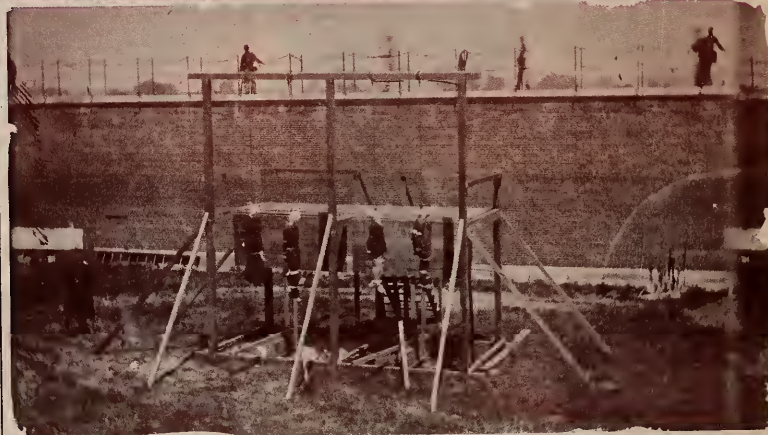
stumbled onto the scene at Garrett's farm, took a good look at the dying man who everyone said was Booth and announced that the man bore no resemblance to the actor. The commanding officer of the squad that had captured Booth ordered Kenzie to keep his mouth shut, forever—or so Kenzie contended.

There was also Basil Moxley, the undertaker who had been the doorman at Baltimore's Holliday Street Theatre and had seen Booth perform there. In 1903 Moxley told a Baltimore newspaper that he had viewed the body which the government had handed over to the Booth family for final burial in the family plot at Greenmount Cemetery in Baltimore; the corpse had reddish hair, said Moxley, and looked nothing like Booth, who was famous for his long, silken, jet-black locks.

ALL OF THIS FIT IN VERY nicely with the Bates story: the body didn't look like Booth because it was the body of some poor dumb Virginia farmhand who got caught on the wrong side of history.

Nate Orlowek was nothing if not enterprising in his research, and he even located a character witness to testify that Bates was no fraud, no profiteer, but a serene and gentle seeker-of-truth who stuck to his beliefs in the face of savage persecution that eventually drove him to his grave. That his character witness also happened to be Bates's son did not seem to bother Orlowek. In fact, it was the testimony of the younger Bates that tipped the balance, Orlowek was so impressed that he started to become a believer.

In the early spring of 1974, Orlowek worked up a four-page brief of facts that supported the Bates theory and mailed it off to Roscoe. Orlowek's training had taught him to respect his elders, and he was ready to hand over all his research to Roscoe if only the master could be persuaded to reopen the case. Roscoe wrote back, offering the opinion that the body buried at Greenmount probably was *not* Booth, but that the Bates theory still didn't wash. Orlowek made a final phone call to Roscoe, asking if there were any point in going on with the research. "If it amuses you," replied the 68-year-old Roscoe, and Orlowek resented what he thought was a patronizing tone. The brushoff left him thoroughly disillusioned, for he had always thought of Roscoe as a man determined to uncover the truth, now Roscoe simply seemed to want to tear people down, to belittle the work of Finis L. Bates. Orlowek decided that he had no choice but to write a book himself; it was nothing less than a moral duty. He was shocked at the injustices perpetrated by the kangaroo military tribunal that tried Booth's eight "coconspirators." There was a distant possibility that one of the conspirators, Lewis Paine, was guilty. But the other seven, Orlowek believed, were simply innocent people who happened to know too much of the truth. Johnson and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had to get them out of the way. That was why Mary Surratt, David Herold and George Atzerodt had been hanged, and why Dr. Samuel Mudd, Sam Arnold, Mike O'Laughlin and Ned Spangler were sent to the fever-ridden Dry Tortugas Prison. Then Bates came along and placed the



FRAMED CONSPIRATORS? HANGED JULY 7TH, 1865:
SURRATT, PAINE, HEROLD AND ATZERODT; BELOW (L TO R) ARNOLD,
O'LAUGHLIN, SPANGLER (ALL JAILED) AND PAINE



GARRETT'S BARN: DID BOOTH REALLY DIE HERE?

guilt where it belonged, with Johnson and Stanton. For his trouble, he was vilified; critics destroyed his good name.

Orlowek felt that he had to set the record straight as a matter of conscience. And his conscience was extremely active and highly trained—an old Orthodox Jew, he prayed in his room three times a day.

"If I were to turn my back on people who went through such terrible things—even though they're mainly dead, although there is a son in Memphis—it would be very hard for me to pray and still do anything with a clear conscience. That's probably taking it pretty far, but I guess that's just the way I look at it."

Orlowek set up his office in the family storeroom. Surrounded by baskets of laundry, an old Hoover and stacks of *National Geographic*s, he began to grind out what would become a 300-page manuscript.

"Since we were in high school and since we had no experience in writing and obviously had a hard job to do, we figured we'd better get some publicity," said Orlowek. He called up a couple of local TV stations and got himself on the news. He gave one interview to a little Civil War magazine and later gave another to the *Washington Star*. That publicity generated the possibility of far more publicity, for it brought feelers from *NBC Nightly News*, the *Today* show and *Weekend*, all eager to put Orlowek on national TV when the book was published. Sheila MacRae, an independent producer, called to suggest a TV movie for CBS built around Orlowek's search for Booth, and there was another offer for a straight movie. "CBS later got cold feet because they were very afraid of Andrew Johnson's descendants suing them," said Orlowek. "I think that's a hollow reason, but last week I called up CBS in California and offered to delete that part. I'd rather have it stay in but I'd rather have a movie without it than no movie at all. They said they'd let me know in a few days, but I still haven't heard from them."

Orlowek was beginning to sound disturbingly like a publicity hound. I pressed him on the subject and he insisted that the publicity was all for the book, not for him; as a neophyte he needed

some press to get publishers interested in his product. This still disturbed me, because Orlowek was certainly smart enough to realize that in America, celebrity trumps every other card, including truth. If he chose to be unscrupulous, he did not need to establish his theories with hard, historical digging; he could simply concentrate on out-publicizing the opposition.

All during the last three years Orlowek kept on collecting material in every conceivable way—he attended historical conventions, wrote letters, made long-distance phone calls, haunted libraries and was even interviewed on radio talk shows. These radio shows yielded some rich material; it was rich as fruitcake. Whenever Orlowek spoke on a talk show, the host was invariably skeptical but the listeners ate up the whole story of Booth's escape. The next day his mother would have to spend hours answering the phone and taking messages from nuts and Civil War buffs and family historians who called to offer tips.

On one show, Orlowek got into the subject of the 18-page gap in Booth's diary. The diary was found on "Booth's" body the night he died. (Bates claimed that Booth accidentally dropped this diary on the floor of the wagon in which he was transported during the final stage of his escape. Realizing later that the diary was missing, Booth sent the farmhand/guide back to retrieve it. Thus the diary ended up in the farmhand's pocket and helped cement the impression that the farmhand was Booth.) It was delivered to Lafayette Baker, the head of the Secret Service, who handed it over to Edwin Stanton. Two years later, a congressional committee demanded to see the diary and it was dug out of the War Department's files. The 18 pages that led up to the night of the assassination were missing; the two remaining pages contained little information. Baker claimed the diary was intact when he gave it to Stanton. Stanton swore that the pages had already been cut out when he received it. And the missing 18 pages have remained far more mysterious than the missing 18 minutes of Nixon's tape.

No sooner had Orlowek got done telling this [Cont. on 91]

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17mm f/4	40	70	80	90
21mm f/2.8	30	60	70	80
24mm f/2.8	25	55	65	75
24mm VFC f/2.8	40	70	80	90
28mm f/2.8	20	50	60	70
28mm f/2.5	25	55	65	75
28mm f/2	30	60	70	80
35mm f/2.8	15	45	55	65
35mm f/1.8	25	55	65	75
50mm Macro f/3.5	25	55	65	75
80-200mm Zoom f/4.5	50	80	90	100
85mm f/1.7	25	55	65	75
100-500mm Zoom f/8	75	105	115	125
100mm Bellows f/4	10	40	50	60
100mm Macro f/3.5	40	70	80	90
100mm f/2.5	20	50	60	70
135mm f/3.5	15	45	55	65
135mm f/2.8	20	50	60	70
200mm f/4.5	20	50	60	70
200mm f/3.5	30	60	70	80
300mm f/5.6	35	65	75	85
300mm f/4.5	40	70	80	90
800mm f/8	75	105	115	125
1600mm f/11	100	130	140	150

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35mm f/2.8	8	38	48	58
50mm Macro f/3.5	15	45	55	65
100-200mm Zoom f/4.5	20	50	60	70
135mm f/3.5	8	38	48	58
135mm f/2.8	10	40	50	60
200mm f/4.5	10	40	50	60



Minolta
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[Cont. from 88] It hasn't helped me as much as I'd hoped. I've had three analysts, all Freudian. The only thing it's helped me do really is to gain a slightly calmer perspective on things. I don't get side-tracked on obsessional issues as much. I tend to question my feelings for various meanings rather than just accepting them at face value automatically.

Do you ever try and crack up your shrink?

No, I'm serious all the time. I practically never make jokes in general, anyway.

No kidding. What are your long-term goals?

I'd like to keep growing in my work. I'd like to do more serious comical films and do different types of films, maybe write and direct a drama. And take chances—I would like to fail a little for the public. Not just for myself—I've already done that. I know I could make a successful comic movie every year, and I could write a comic play that would do very well on Broadway every year. What I want to do is go on to areas that I'm insecure about and not so good at. This next movie I'm going to do is very different than anything I've ever done and not nearly a sure thing. It will be much more real, and serious. The alternative is to do what the Marx Brothers did—which is a mistake for them, and they're geniuses. That is, they make the same movie all the time—brilliant, but the same one. Chaplin grew, took chances, and failed—he did the right thing. That's very important. Comedians fall into that trap very easily—they just hit a formula that works and they cash in on the same thing time and time again.

What's your ultimate fantasy?

On the possible side, to make very interesting serious movies, as I said. On the impossible side, I fantasize playing guard for the Knicks and being black—if I had my life to live over again, among the things I'd like to be is a black basketball player. Or a concert pianist, a conductor, a ballet dancer—I'm a big fan of ballet and modern dance.

What's your favorite color?
I like autumnal hues a lot—you can tell from *Love and Death*.

The photography in that movie was incredible.

My grasp of photography is getting better. That movie required it. You know, in Paris you get that weather all the time—foggy and gray. If you shoot in California, it's sunny and it doesn't look so nice.

LINCOLN

[Cont. from 47] tale than an anonymous caller phoned the radio show and announced that the missing pages were still in existence and could be found somewhere in the vicinity of Schenectady, New York. The caller would say no more. Orlowek knew of a Schenectady antique dealer who was rumored to know something about the whereabouts of the pages. In a telephone conversation, the antique dealer assumed the tantalizingly paranoid tone of Deep Throat. Yes, he said, the missing pages were owned by descendants of Stanton, who were deeply ashamed of them. That was all he could say, and he would deny saying even that if Orlowek ever wrote anything about it. "You'll never see those pages as long as you live," the dealer told Orlowek.

It was late when I left the Orloweks', and as I drove down a deserted Pennsylvania Avenue, past Ford's Theatre and the White House, past the site of Kirkwood House, where Booth and Johnson were alleged to have cut their murderous deal, I realized how thoroughly Nate Orlowek had spooked me with his ghost stories. He had carried on with such enthusiasm, such idealism, suchchutzpah, that I began to feel myself rooting for him—rooting for a nut theory! That would never do; next day I began to check his story out for flaws. I read the Roscoe book and the Bates book (which were, by turns, lawyerlike tract and flowery polemic) and then called up three experts in the field.

Brooklyn College professor Hans Trefousse, an authority on Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction, dismissed Orlowek's ideas as "sheer nonsense." The Bates book? "It's just silly," said Trefousse, "no one believes that nowadays. You see, it's very interesting that just as in the Kennedy assassination, there are all sorts of strange theories that don't make sense. Booth was killed at Garrett's farm and that's all there is to it. But that explanation is too simple to satisfy some people."

Bruce Catton, definitive chronicler of the Civil War, said that the Bates theory had been "completely exploded." In the gentlest and most civilized of voices, he declared himself to be "kind of violent on the subject" and suggested I call Ralph G. Newman, a noted Lincoln expert and president of the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop, Inc., in Chicago.

"Only the nuts believe in that!" said Newman of the Bates book. "I think the Lincoln assassination, like the Kennedy assassination, became a case where we have learned so much that the facts we [Cont. on 92]

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[Cont. from 91] do know have become confusing—and of course, there are a lot of gaps. But the public refuses to accept a mundane, routine, logical explanation, because when we lose a great hero, we want a romantic, sinister, bizarre explanation." Since Newman was based in Chicago, I mentioned that Orlewok had said that a group of physicians from Northwestern University examined the Booth mummy in 1931 and stated in an affidavit that the body had all the right marks: the eyebrow scar, the bent thumb, the broken leg; they even found in the stomach a signet ring with the initial "B".

"That document doesn't exist, period," Newman said heatedly. "Nobody that I know has ever seen it, and that settles it. You want to settle the whole thing for good? Dig up the Booth plot in Baltimore and you'll find the remains of John Wilkes Booth." Toward the end of our conversation, Newman advised me to read *The Great American Myth* by George S. Bryan, "one of the soundest books on the subject, awfully good."

The consensus of these three men that neither Andrew Johnson nor Edwin Stanton had any hand in the Lincoln assassination was difficult to assault. Together, the three of them must have devoted 100 years to the study of Lincolniana. They knew the landscape of the 19th century vastly better than Orlewok could hope to. Yet both Trefousse and Newman seemed to suffer from a blind spot—they seemed to believe the Warren commission. It was impossible that an entire older generation of historians was constitutionally unfit to explain the Lincoln assassination because they were hopelessly prejudiced against all conspiracy theories. It might yet be true that a young man who reached the age of reason just as Jack Kennedy was shot, and grew up with Oswald theories, Sirhan theories, Bremer theories, Ray theories and finally Watergate theories (which proved to be true)—that such a young man might see what older eyes had missed. One point for Orlewok.

Yet *The Great American Myth*, the book recommended by Newman, made Orlewok look very bad, for it seemed to wipe out some of his best evidence. Author George S. Bryan made it clear that Booth was a favorite of the nut theorists. By 1929, at least 20 people had reported Booth to be alive and well, and he had been sighted in places as far-flung as Mexico City and Bombay. In 1898, a Mrs. J. M. Christ of Beloit, Wisconsin, informed a reporter from the *Beloit Daily News* that Booth had escaped via Key West and Havana to England, where he died. The very next day, another citizen of Beloit, Wilson Kenzie, came

forth to announce that the man shot at Garrett's farm was not Booth. The timing of this revelation was extremely suspicious—why had Kenzie waited 30 years to get it off his chest? Worse, Kenzie's facts were wrong. He claimed to have become "thoroughly acquainted" with Booth while stationed in New Orleans during the winter of 1862-63. But according to Bryan, Booth was not in New Orleans at that time. Kenzie said that his Army unit—Company F, First U.S. Artillery—had arrived at Garrett's farm after the 16th New York Cavalry had already shot "Booth" and captured his accomplice, David Herold. The Army's records showed that the 16th was the only military unit at the farm that night. "It is impossible that Kenzie could have been at Garrett's," wrote Bryan. So much for Kenzie.

But what about Basil Moxley, the Baltimore undertaker, who said that the corpse buried in the Booth plot was a redhead? "It was not until the spring of 1903, after the press had for weeks been agog with stories about how Booth... had committed suicide in Oklahoma, that Moxley, then nearly 80 years of age and rather crotchety, made in the *Baltimore American* what that paper termed a 'remarkable disclosure,'" wrote Bryan. The disclosure was nothing more than a rambling tale, Bryan reported; another witness who examined Booth's body at the undertaker's declared that "if Mr. Moxley saw the remains... and says the hair was red, he is colorblind."

Orlewok was in the habit of quoting both Kenzie and Moxley as if they were the most reliable of sources, yet Bryan showed that both men had made their statements in the immediate wake of someone else's disclosure. (There seems to be no evidence that Kenzie ever told his story before 1898, or that Moxley ever revealed his tale before 1903.) That is the classic pattern with crackpots—one theory always triggers another, and the theories propagate like crime waves. In the light of Bryan's book, it was beginning to look as if Orlewok's technique was simply to corroborate one nut theory (Bates's) with other nut theories. If that were true, then Orlewok was simply the most recent link in a long chain of crackpots and charlatans.

Orlewok had collected much of his evidence through a vast network of personal contacts, and some of it was painfully tenuous. For instance, Orlewok had high hopes of finding the mummy. A little Civil War publication called *North South Trader* had run a story on Orlewok, quoting him as saying that the mummy was last seen in 1957 in Venice, California. Seeing the article, a reader called to [Cont. on 94]

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[Cont. from 92] say that he had spotted the mummy himself—it was in an antique shop on the Seattle waterfront, he couldn't remember the name of the place. Orlewok seemed very sure that finding the mummy was simply a matter of finding someone in Seattle to track it down. He had not had much success with his contacts in the Northwest, so I decided to give it a try.

Calling a friend in Seattle, I explained the situation. "Of course," said the friend, "everyone here knows that mummy—he is down on the waterfront, in a tourist trap called Ye Olde Curiosity Shop. I'll go down and take a look at him if you want." Four days later a postcard arrived, bearing a hideous Ekta-chrome of what looked like an Auschwitz victim. The printed message on the back said: "SYLVESTER THE DESERT MUMMY. About 1895, two wandering cowboys riding through the Gila Bend Desert of central Arizona came upon the nude body of a man half-buried in the treacherous shifting sands . . . It has since remained unidentified. The body is of a man about 45 years of age, 5'11" tall and weighs at present 137 pounds. Death came through a gunshot wound in the stomach. Scientists have said that this is a perfect example of natural dehydration. . . ."

Underneath this printed legend, my friend had written: "Tim—No unarguable scar above right eye, but hard to tell—there is a break in the skin, etc. Also, right thumb & forefinger look perfect. Posted here is a Feb. 14, 1965, article from *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* saying it's not John Wilkes Booth."

Orlewok's theory was crumbling on all fronts—the best historians in the field dismissed it as gibberish, the Kenzie and Moxley statements looked like hallucinations, and now the mummy turned out to be aringer. Orlewok must never have read the Bryan book, or else he would have known that he was using nut theories to shore up other nut theories. There was nothing left to do but call him with the bad news: his evidence just didn't make it. I felt rotten about doing it. Orlewok was obviously sincere, and he had spent three years on the project, getting his hopes up. How would he react? Would he go into a deep depression? Would his confidence be shot for life?

"Listen, Nate," I said when he answered the phone, "I've been doing some research of my own and I've got some serious doubts." I was trying to break it to him gently. First I told him about the mummy.

He took it well. "I wasn't really that optimistic that we would find the mummy in Seattle," he said bravely. "But it

must be someplace. Maybe when your magazine comes out, someone who has the mummy will read it."

Next I told him about phoning Catton, Trefousse and Newman. "Oh, yeah," said Orlewok, "Newman is the guy who supposedly doctored Nixon's tax returns. He was sentenced a couple of months ago. Yeah—he's noted as a Lincoln scholar, yes." There was just a hint of irony in his voice, which was definitely beginning to brighten. He said he was not surprised that the three men did not believe Bates.

I forged ahead. "You see, Nate, Newman put me on to this book by a guy named George S. . . ."

"Bryan," said Orlewok. "Yeah, I was looking at it again just the other day."

Orlewok knew all about the flaws in Kenzie and Moxley and wasn't terribly bothered by them. Did they get a couple facts wrong? Well, they were talking 35 years after the fact, their memories were bound to be a little hazy. Why did they speak up so late in the day? Orlewok had an explanation. "If some guy came up to me on the street and said he was Lee Harvey Oswald," said Orlewok, "I would not tell anybody about it and I doubt you would either. Because I'd think the guy was crazy, which is what these other people thought at first. But if on the next day I saw in the paper where ten other people said they saw Lee Harvey Oswald, I would probably call the newspaper and say, 'Hey, I saw Lee Harvey Oswald.'"

Orlewok was just warming up, and he went on. "It seems hard to believe that these two people would just spring up and make up a story," he said. "If you're assuming that both Kenzie and Moxley made up stories, then why is it that they both say that the body had red hair? And why is it that farmer Garrett's wife said that the guy they shot at the farm had red hair? And St. Helen told Bates that the farmhand who was shot that night was named either Ruddy or Roby. Well, a lady down in White Plains, Maryland, who is the family historian of the Robys,

says that a farmhand named Gerald Ruddy disappeared on April 26th, 1865—the night Booth was supposedly shot. And she says that the Ruddy family had a history of having red hair! There are just too many people saying this—it can't have been rigged."

"Now, wait a moment, slow down," I said. "You're losing me. I didn't think Kenzie said anything about red hair."

"Actually, only some sources give that part of Kenzie's statement," said Orlewok. "Others leave it out." When I pressed Orlewok for sources, it came out that the Kenzie "red hair" statement, the Garrett "red hair" statement and the Ruddy information all originated from the same source—a bunch of affidavits that Finis Bates had collected in the last years of his life. These affidavits now belonged to two people whom Orlewok said were "on the other side"—i.e., they believed that Booth "was killed at the barn. These two people refused to show the Bates affidavits to anybody. Orlewok would not even tell me their names, because he was still hoping against hope to make a deal with the reluctant affidavit owners, and he did not want to jeopardize his chances.

All of this was getting pretty far-fetched. The phrase "red hair" popped into my mind, but I didn't say anything. I decided it would be kinder just to give Orlewok the coup de grace.

"You remember that 1931 Chicago doctors' affidavit you told me about?" I said. "I asked Ralph Newman about it and he said no such document existed."

"Well, I have it in my house," Orlewok shot back.

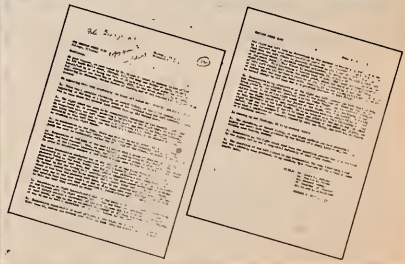
"You do?"

"It definitely exists and I definitely have it," he said with a laugh. "A lot of people don't know it exists, so I can understand why they would be skeptical about it," he added generously.

"Will you send it to me, Nate?"

"Sure."

A week later it came in the mail. Here it is. As far as I'm concerned, Nate Orlewok is still in business.





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JUNE 30 AT A THEATER NEAR YOU

He Thinks VP Had Lincoln Shot

By Thomas Love

Washington Star Staff Writer

Nate Orlowek, a 17-year-old Silver Spring college freshman, is tossing out yet another conspiracy theory about presidential assassination that the Secret Service hasn't thought of. It pins the responsibility on the man who stood to benefit most from the President's death — the vice president.

But the assassination Orlowek has in mind is controversial only among the historians. It is that of Abraham Lincoln, and the young scholar's ideas about it make most theories about more recent assassinations seem tame.

With the help of four friends Orlowek has written a book to show that the Lincoln assassination was actually the brainchild of then-Vice President Andrew Johnson, and that assassin John Wilkes Booth wasn't fatally shot in a Virginia barn shortly after the murder but in fact lived on until 1903.

ORLOWEK ADMITS that his theory about Johnson's involvement may be weak, but he has gathered a great deal of material to back the Booth story which has been a subject

of controversy since shortly after Lincoln's death.

Although the vast majority of what he has gathered about Booth has already been published one place or another over the years, Orlowek may well have put more of it into one volume than any previous researcher, and he thinks he has some new data lending strength to the theory.

"In August of 1973," he recalled, "I was reading 'The Web of Conspiracy,' a book about the assassination which mentioned a book written by a man named Bates raising questions about the accepted Booth history. I looked it up in the University of Maryland Library Rare Book Room and it seemed to make sense.

"I was a little concerned," he said, "that maybe Booth escaped and that the accepted history was wrong. It troubled me that this might be true, so I decided to go into it."

Shortly afterwards, he ran into his first major obstacle as a youthful historian — he was barred from the rare book room of the Library of Congress because he was only a high school student.

NOT ONE to let petty regulations stand in his way, however, Orlowek contacted Sen. Charles McC. Math-

ias, R-Md., for help. Mathias not only got him into the rare book collection — the only source for some of the research — but later agreed to write the foreword for the book.

After digging into the available sources, Orlowek decided to write a book gathering together the evidence contradicting the accepted version of the assassination. He enlisted the aid of Howard Kaufer, Marc Binstock, Lenard Lamm and Andy Goldsmith, also students at Northwood High School. Lamm is now at American University and the other four are attending the University of Maryland.

Orlowek's theories generally are based on the statements of a man who went by the aliases of John St. Helen and David George and who claimed years after the assassination that he was really Booth.

In 1877 at Granbury, Tex., the story goes, St. Helen thought he was dying and confessed to his best friend, a lawyer named Finis Bates, that he was Booth. He described the assassination and his escape.

More than 20 years later, a man named George told the same tale to a minister's wife at El Reno, Okla.

See **BOOTH**, B-4

BOOTH

Continued From B-1

When he died in 1903 at Enid, Okla., he confessed again, mentioning that he had told his story to Bates.

BATES CAME to view the body and said it was St. Helen. Then, fascinated by the Booth question, Bates travelled around the country talking to people and amassing statements and documents on the question. He finally published a book — the one which initially raised questions in Orlowek's mind.

Booth's body was supposedly mummified and displayed at side shows for years. Orlowek thinks he has traced it to Los Angeles in 1957 and may be on the trail of its present location.

One reason why people have always envisioned myriad conspiracies behind the Lincoln shooting is the secrecy with which the conspirators' trial was held and the sealing of its records.

The man who called himself St. Helen, George and Booth allegedly claimed that he had met with Johnson the morning of the assassination and that the vice president had told him to kill Lincoln. This is the assassination's only direct tie to Johnson, Orlowek admits, but he builds other questions about Johnson's motives around his actions following the trial of the conspirators.

ACCORDING TO Orlowek's account, Booth left Washington with Johnson's help, and did just what history has said until he arrived at the Garrett farm where he was allegedly shot by an over-eager soldier

St. Helen-George-Booth claimed that he left the farm before the troops arrived because he had been warned they were in the area.

He is supposed to have claimed that he sent another man to get his papers from the farm and that man, not Booth, was shot in the barn with Booth's papers in his pockets.

Who was the man who may have died in Booth's place? Orlowek believes he has the answer from a Maryland family historian who tells of a doctor's helper, answering the description of the "Booth" body, who disappeared April 26, 1865.

The description of the body has been a point of controversy for 100 years. Those who back the accepted theory that it really was Booth's insist it was well identified after being brought back to Washington. Those who question the theory claim that contemporary descriptions of the body do not jibe with what is known of Booth's physical characteristics.

Burial of the body was handled secretly and without public viewing, some insist, because Secretary of War Edwin Stanton was obsessed with the fear that the assassin's body would become an object of veneration to the South.

A major publisher is now considering Orlowek's book. The author was promised an answer in four weeks, but so far the publisher has held the manuscript for more than 12 weeks — surely a good sign, says Orlowek.

Clarence E. Thorne, 56, a partner of Thorne & Beall Brothers Insurance Co. and owner of the Clarence E. Thorne Insurance agency in Seat Pleasant, died Saturday of cancer in Greater Southeast Community Hospital. He lived on Old Allentown Road in Friendly, Md.

Thorne, a native of La Plata, was in the insurance business in the District and Maryland for 36 years. At one time he was manager of the PeoplesLife Insur-

ance Co. offices in Hyattsville and Baltimore. He was an agency owner since 1964.

He leaves his wife, Frances S.; two sons, Randolph C., and Robert A.; a stepdaughter, Dorothy Tanner; a stepson, Robert Cupp; his mother, Sadie Thorne, of Hyattsville, three sisters and a grandchild.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. tomorrow in the Kalas Funeral Home, 6160 Oxon Hill Road, Oxon Hill, with burial in Cedar Hill Cemetery.

William Godwin

William J. Godwin, 56, a builder of custom homes in Fairfax County for 30 years, died Saturday in Arlington Hospital of complications following lung surgery. He lived on N. 8th Street in Arlington.

For the last five years, Godwin built homes in the Oakton area with his firm, W.J. Godwin & Sons. He entered the construction business after serving as a technical sergeant in the Army.

During World War II he received the nickname "Bomb Proof" because while he was under fire on an Italian beach, three Ger-

man bombs fell into the fox hole he was occupying, but all three were duds. Later he was wounded in Germany and was awarded the Purple Heart.

He leaves his wife, Edna, and two sons, Rev. Rick E., and E. Keith, and four brothers, Branson, Astor, P.G. and Ray, all of Arlington, three sisters in North Carolina and one sister in Massachusetts.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. tomorrow in the Arlington Funeral Home, N. Quincy Street and Fairfax Drive, Arlington, with burial in National Memorial Park.

